**Ordinary Person in Media: Risk of Lack**

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This paper is based on results of the research project “Media Discourses on Material and Ethnic Gaps. A comparative study in St. Petersburg and Stockholm” financed by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies (Sweden). One of the main sections of the project focused on portraying ordinary persons in comparison with images of so-called celebrities in the regional media. Basic hypothesis of the study consisted in prevailing media attention to exclusive persons. This situation should be understood as a reflection of fundamental social contradiction: a formal equality in rights vs. an inequality of opportunities of different social groups. Russian and Swedish scholars used a set of methods such as content analysis of newspapers and TV, expert in-depth interviews, and focus groups (2013, Spring - Summer). In fact, common men appeared absent in 21.8% of TV excerpts in Russia and 14.3% in Sweden; in 66.1% and 12.4% newspaper articles accordingly. At the same time non-commons were not shown in 12.5% Russian TV items and in 66.9% Swedish TV news; in print media 22.3% and 74.3% correspondingly. The hypothesis was proved in full, at least in the case of Russian media. Additionally, ordinary persons play relatively passive role in the media items, e.g. of victims or eye-witnesses, not subjects of action. To explain obvious gaps between Russian and Swedish findings one needs to take into account different social and mental traditions in these countries. In Russia, there is a strong custom to perceive officials and other celebrities as respectful upper strata, not as public service employees (Sweden). This attitude has been revealed within expert interviews and focus groups. In other terms, the media staff has lost sharp interest to ordinary people. Being a trend, it means a lack of interest to mainstream everyday life which is represented in the common persons’ lives, opinions, and images.